

HAWAII'S PERSPECTIVE ON FOOD IRRADIATION

LYLE WONG, Ph.D.

Plant Industry Administrator
Hawaii Department of Agriculture

Hawaii's agriculture is undergoing a radical transition from plantation agriculture to a more diverse base of tropical fruits, vegetables, and ornamentals with the phase down of the sugar and pineapple plantations. The focus of this diversification is export to the Mainland U.S. and foreign destinations. The major limitation is the need for insect disinfestation before export. The insects of concern include a number of species of fruit flies, mango seed weevil, and other insect and mite pests of quarantine importance.

Disinfestation can be achieved by irradiation. Aircargo shipments of exotic fruits from Hawaii (USDA Limited Permit shipments) are being made to the Isomedix facility in Morton Grove, Illinois, to assess the scientific and operational requirements for a commercial irradiator in Hawaii. The quarantine treated fruit employing gamma irradiation has been offered for retail sale in Illinois, Indiana, and Ohio with excellent customer and retailer response.

Hawaii is the only state under Federal quarantine for fruit flies. The quarantine has constraint the expansion of diversified agriculture in Hawaii for over 50 years. Irradiation is a viable alternative quarantine treatment that can be readily applied to the vast majority of exotic tropical fruits now in commercial production in Hawaii. Hawaii is uniquely positioned by circumstances, location, and need to evaluate the commercial feasibility of irradiation as a quarantine treatment. The work to date has been a joint industry, agency, and USDA-ARS/APHIS effort to seek expanded agricultural opportunities for Hawaii.

09/26/95
1893/PDCA